



County of Erie

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In the near future Erie County will be putting out a Request for Proposal RFP for a Countywide Alphanumeric Alerting System. In an effort to keep the County public safety agencies informed, below are a few Frequently Asked Questions.

1. Why is the County building a 1-way alphanumeric alerting system?

- A. Ability to instantaneously alert all responders county wide simultaneously
- A. So every first responder will be on the same network at the same level
- A. Coverage will improve for many departments.
- A. A large amount of information can be disseminated quickly.

2. Will my coverage on the alphanumeric system be as good as on the voice system?

- A. Yes. The system requires high level coverage throughout the County. Alphanumeric alerting typically outperforms voice alerting and most users will realize improved coverage.

3. What will be the cost to my department?

- A. The County will purchase a pager for each member of your department, based upon your Active Member Roster.
- A. Although there is no initial cost to each department, it is recognized that maintenance and upgrading of the technology is critical if the system is to perform with the capabilities that it is intended to. The plan is that there will be no cost to departments for the first two years. Consideration is being given so that starting in year 3 there will be a minimal monthly charge to cover maintenance and technological upgrades.

4. Will I be able to keep my existing 2-tone voice alerting system?

- A. YES. The decision to migrate to alphanumeric alerting will be that of the individual departments.

5. Can I use both voice and alphanumeric systems?

- A. Yes.

6. Are alphanumeric pagers capable of receiving voice pages?

- A. Yes. Synthesized digital voice pagers are on the market but the cost could be prohibitive and the technology is not advanced enough to produce a product that is suitable for public safety use. Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) data and storage of messages in the pager itself are extremely limited making the feasibility of these type of pages unsuitable at the present time.

7. Will the pager be loud enough to wake me up?

- A. The pager will be programmed to recognize an emergency alert from a dispatcher. The emergency alert is a unique tone that will open the pager in at maximum volume. The maximum volume level is equal, or louder, than the typical buzzer on an alarm clock.

8. Will this alerting system be used by other agencies?

- A. Yes. This system provides a common platform for alerting of other agencies. This is very useful for simultaneously alerting multiple agencies with critical information.

9. Will I be able to send a page from the internet?

- A. Yes. In addition to public safety dispatching, this system is intended to be used everyday for personal use. Alphanumeric pages such as "*pick up a loaf of bread*" will be able to be sent to individual pagers.

10. Will I be able to send a page from a standard telephone?

- A. Yes. However, the type of page will not be alphanumeric (text page). The type of page will be numeric only (i.e. 716-555-1212)

11. Will the pager work County-wide.

- A. Yes. In most cases it will work where the existing voice systems will not work.

12. When I am en-route to a fire I want to monitor the progress of the incident, how do I know if the call is turned back or if the status changes to Stand Down?

- A. Alphanumeric technology allows for clear and concise delivery of urgent messages almost instantaneously.
A. Alphanumeric pagers have programmable alert tones, in that, when you receive a call, dispatch will alert with a special tone. The same feature can be enabled for a stand-down condition.

13. What about 2-way alerting?

- A. We have investigated the use of 2-way alerting and found frequency availability to be a limiting factor. However, the RFP document is not restrictive or preventing any vendor from proposing of 2-way alerting system.

14. What will I see on my alphanumeric pager?

- A. You will see the information as entered by the dispatcher into the CAD software. This information contains all of the critical information required to dispatch the call.

Here are 4 Examples of alerting messages:

- *Airport Alert 2 in progress (ADI/MERS)*
- *BDS Activation – Post Office – 1200 William St – CPC Response-advise MERS 898-3696 of*
- *receipt of page (ADI/MERS)*
- *FYI 3 Amb request MVA (address) (ADI/MERS)*
- *EMS 1234 Center Rd, Male 73 chest pains (HFC)*

15. Why can't we just use a commercial alerting carrier company instead of building our own?

- A. For those who have experienced the service of a commercial carrier grade service, there is no control over the time that it takes to receive a page from the time it is sent. Times can vary from seconds, to many minutes, to never. This service is fine for non-public safety dispatch operations. A County owned, maintained, and administrated system will insure **public-safety grade** of service.

If you have any questions or comments please call the Department of Emergency Services, Dan Neaverth Jr. at 983-6080

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